

# Monday is Red Beans and Rice Day

## Red Beans and Rice Day

During my time living and studying in New Orleans, I always wondered why my friends would anticipate their mother's or grandmother's meals at the beginning of the work week. That's because Monday is Red Beans and Rice Day in the Crescent City.

Whether served up at home or as the Monday special at many of the New Orleans restaurants, there's nothing like a pot of slow cooked creamy red beans. Just serve them over rice and top with a few dashes of Louisiana hot sauce. It's pure Cajun and Creole heaven!

They're so good Louis Armstrong not only ate them, but he signed his name,

*"Red Beans and Ricely*

*Yours,*

*Louis Armstrong!"*



New Orleans Red Beans and Rice

## **So why do we eat the Louisiana Creole dish on Mondays?**

Traditionally on Sunday a ham was served for supper after church. You probably remember having a big meal every Sunday at Grandma's, right? Since the following day Monday was laundry day and during those times people didn't have washing machines a low-fuss meal needed to be prepared.

You see, the ladies of the house (generally house maids) had to scrub the family's clothes by hand, often having to boil the garments and then use a crank and wringer to dry them as much as possible in preparation for hanging them on the clothes line.

As you can imagine, there wasn't much time to cook a meal, let alone a fancy one. Therefore, the women would soak the red beans overnight, put a pot of beans on the stove; including the "[The Holy Trinity](#)", a few other simple ingredients, as well as Sunday dinner's ham bone. Voila! The laundry was cleaned and a filling and low-cost delicious meal was ready for supper on Monday evening.

## Who Brought Red Beans to New Orleans?

Red beans were most likely first introduced in New Orleans when sugar plantation owners fled Saint-Dominge (Haiti) for Louisiana after the Haitian slaves revolted in the 1790s. The old Haitian recipe *Riz et Pois Rouges* mirrors the red beans and rice recipes that slaves either cooked for themselves or their slave master's families. The dish is called *Arroz con habichuela* in Spanish-speaking countries, such as Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Dominican Republic, and is also a popular staple meal. You'll even find varieties in Jamaica and India too.

While traditional New Orleans cuisine is thought to be spicy (namely Cajun and less often Creole dishes) red beans and rice are rather mild, so you'll always find a large bottle of Louisiana hot sauce on the table if you want to add some kick.

It's almost Monday wherever you are in the world, so how about cooking a pot of Red Beans and Rice ?

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# French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois)

## French Epiphany Cake Recipe

Today is January 6th Epiphany, marking the visit of the Magi to the Christ child. People all over the world people are celebrating Epiphany by baking cakes and celebrating the holiday with friends and family members. In thousands of lucky homes a delicious warm French Epiphany Cake or *galette des rois* (kings's tart) will be served.

While living in New Orleans, to celebrate Epiphany or the beginning of the Carnival, I traditionally bought or [baked a Mardi Gras King Cake](#), but today I decided to bake a *galette des rois*.

I should be taking down the Christmas decorations but baking is so much more fun ☐



French Epiphany Cake

The French Epiphany cake *galette des rois* is a light dessert made of puff-pastry filled with a creamy frangipane (almond paste). The cake is relatively easy to make requiring about one hour of time from start to finish.

## Epiphany Cake Traditions

The Epiphany Cake is served to celebrate the feast of Epiphany or Twelfth night marking the end of Christmas when the Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child Jesus. There is a tradition dating back to the middle ages that after the cake is served, the last piece (“piece for



poor” or “piece for the virgin”) is reserved for the first needy person knocking at your door. It’s not likely to happen, so I follow the second tradition.

In every French Epiphany or Mardi Gras cake there’s a little surprise hidden inside. In France it’s a fava bean (*fève*) or trinket (*santon*). In New Orleans a baby Jesus figurine is hidden in the colorful cake to symbolize rebirth or renewal. The person who gets the piece with the trinket is declared king or queen, gets to wear the crown, and should buy the next cake.



Mardi Gras King Cake trinket, Wiki photo by Nono64

I wore the crown last year, so this year I’m baking a French Epiphany cake to see who will become king or queen in my home today.

## **French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois)**

# Ingredients

- 500 grams (1 lb 2 ounces) ready-made puff pastry
- 100 grams (4 ounces) finely ground almonds
- 75 grams (3 ounces) sugar
- 50 grams (2 ounces) softened butter
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 teaspoon French Cognac (optional)
- 1 bean (*fève*), almond, or *santon* (figurine)

# Directions

1. Pre-heat the oven to 210 Celsius (410 Fahrenheit).
2. Divide the pasty in two parts. Roll out each to a circle about 23 cm (9 inches) wide or size of your pie pan.
3. By hand or using a stand mixer, mix the almonds, sugar, butter, one egg, and Cognac until a smooth paste is formed.
4. Place the first circle on the non-stick pie dish and spread the paste evenly across but not too close to the edges.
5. Place a *fève* or figurine on top of the paste near the outer edge.
6. Carefully place the second disk on top and seal the two edges with a fork.
7. Brush the top with the egg yolk and decorate by making a swirl pattern using a knife.
8. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden.

Before serving a warm slice of French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois), warn your guests of the trinket to avoid an unnecessary visit to the dentist.

Bon appetit!

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# Po' Boy History

I like my Po' boys dressed, and you? Before you ask, read on to learn about Po' boy history and you'll understand what I'm talking about.



Po' boy sandwich

Around 1910, brothers Bennie and Clovis Martin left their Acadiana region home in Raceland, Louisiana, for the big city of New Orleans. Both worked as streetcar conductors and about 12 years later opened a coffee stand which would eventually make Po' boy (also po-boy, po boy, or poor boy for your Northerners) sandwich history.

Imagine New Orleans in July 1, 1929, hot, hot, and even hotter after heated negotiations with union streetcar motormen and the street car owners went icy cold. There were around 1,100 streetcar workers union jobs in jeopardy and things really started to heat up when the street car company invited non-union workers or "strike breakers" from New York who were known career criminals to run the street cars. This really upset the union supporters and more than 10,000 New Orleanians gathered downtown as strike supporters gathered and then burned the first car operated by a strike breaker.

Sympathetic to the cause, the public avoided the streetcar transit system for about two weeks. Times were hard for the union workers, so businesses donated goods and services to the



union including the the Martin Brothers, former union streetcar workers themselves, who said “Our meal is free to any members of Division 194.”

The free meal ended up being a sandwich, but not just any sandwich and whenever the Martin brothers saw one of the striking men coming, one of them would say, ‘Here comes another poor boy.’ Hence the Po’ boy sandwich is born.

### **What is a Po’ boy?**

Now, a “real” Po’ boy contains Louisiana fried shrimp, oysters, soft shell crab, catfish, crawfish, Louisiana hot sausage, fried chicken breast, or roast beef. Equally important is that a Po’ boy isn’t a Po’ boy unless it’s served on New Orleans Po’ boy French bread which has a crisp crust and a fluffy center.

You see, traditional French bread has narrow ends which doesn’t usually get eaten, so the Martins worked with a local baker to develop a 40-inch loaf of bread that retained it’s uniform, rectangular shape from end to end and simply filled their Po’ boys with your favorite meat or fried seafood.

### **How to order a Po’ boy**

My first experience to a Po’ boy stand was quite embarrassing. I was a newbie to the Crescent City and when the waitress asked me what kind of Po’ boy I wanted. I replied in my most mid-western accent asking “What varieties of poor boy sandwiches do you have please?”

She graciously pointed to the menu wall and the seafood and meat combinations overwhelmed me, so I asked for an oyster poor boy. Then she asked me if I wanted it dressed or undressed? Luckily, a bystander helped me out explaining that a “dressed” Po’ boy has lettuce, tomato, pickles, and mayonnaise and an “undressed” Po’ boy contains only the meat or seafood filling placed on the Po’ boy bread.

Since then I flock to New Orleans or anywhere in Southwest Louisiana, as often as possible because life without my dressed oyster Po' boy is simply unbearable.

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## Mardi Gras King Cake Recipe

Hey, if you are reading this [Mardi Gras King Cake](#) recipe post you either yelled "I got the baby" at a king cake party or just want to bake a delicious piece of New Orleans history. Either way, remember, *Laissez les bons temps rouler* (Cajun French expression meaning) "Let the good times roll."



Mardi Gras King Cake

### Mardi Gras King Cake Recipe

Time: 4 1/2 hours

Yield: Two Mardi Gras King Cakes

1. Scald the milk and remove from heat. Stir in 1/4 cup of butter and let milk liquid cool to room temperature.
2. In a large bowl (or Kitchen Aid mixer bowl), dissolve yeast in the warm water with 1 tablespoon of the white sugar and let stand until creamy and bubbly, about 10

minutes.

3. Once the yeast mixture activates, add the milk/butter mixture. Whisk in the eggs. Stir in the remaining white sugar, salt and nutmeg.
4. Beat the flour into the milk/egg mixture 1 cup at a time (either by using the Kitchen Aid hook attachment or by hand). When the dough begins to pull together, turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic for about 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Use a neutral oil to lightly oil a large bowl, place the dough in the bowl and turn it to ensure all sides are coated.
6. Cover dough with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 2 hours. Once dough has risen, punch it down and divide it in half (for 2 cakes).
7. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) and then line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.

### **Mardi Gras King Cake Filling Directions**

1. In a medium sized bowl, combine the brown sugar, cinnamon, pecans, 1/2 cup flour and 1/2 cup raisins. Pour 1/2 cup melted butter over the cinnamon mixture and mix until crumbly.

### **King Cake Dough Final Preparation (we're almost done!)**

1. Roll dough halves out into rectangles (approximately 10×16 inches). Sprinkle the filling evenly over the dough being careful not to get too close to the long edge and beginning at the long side, roll each half as tightly as possible like a cinnamon jelly roll.
2. Bring the ends of each roll together to form 2 oval shaped rings. Place each ring around a **buttered/oiled** tall ceramic bowl or empty coffee tin on the lined cookie sheet. This will ensure the Mardi Gras King Cake shape maintains its shape while baking.

3. Let the two king cake rolls rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.
4. Remove the buttered/oiled tall ceramic bowl or empty coffee tin before baking.
5. Bake in preheated oven for about 20-25 minutes.
6. Once the cakes are done, make a slit with a knife and push a doll or trinket into the bottom of each cake. Don't forget to warn your colleagues about the trinket otherwise, you might be paying for their dental bill.
7. Frost the cakes while they are still warm with the powdered sugar blend. I used a plastic glove to smear the frosting onto each cake.
8. Quickly sprinkle the yellow, purple, and green colored sugars onto the cake.

Enjoy cake at your next Mardi Gras King Cake party and don't forget to keep track of who finds the baby.

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## **Mardi Gras King Cake**

They yelled "Who got the baby?" and the party guest looked bewildered. He took another careful bite, slowly rolling the object with his tongue, and then slowly spit it out yelling "I got the baby, so I'm king for the day!" When I hear such stories it reminds me it's Mardi Gras King Cake time!



Mardi Gras King Cake

Every year Carnival season officially begins on January 6th or the “Twelfth Night,” also known to Christians as the “Epiphany” and oh my, I’m just getting around to baking the holiday cakes nearly two weeks before the end of Carnival. I know, I know, it’s shameful, so today I’m baking two Mardi Gras King Cakes just to catch up.

The seasonal cake, a delicious brioche-like pastry and is not only rich in history but flavor too. The King Cake origin is thought to have been brought to New Orleans from France in 1870. The round or oval-shaped cake is shaped similar to a crown, and has a toy baby hidden inside, but in the past coins, beans, pecans, or peas were hidden in each King Cake.

As pieces of the delicious cake are eaten at Mardi Gras King Cake parties, someone will yell “Who got the baby?” Customarily the lucky person whose piece of cake contained the toy favor was crowned king or queen for the day, but today, the recipient is expected to host a king cake party at least purchase the next cake.



Mardi King Cake trinket, Wiki photo by Non064

Rich history means rich flavors for a Mardi Gras King Cake. Think yummy cinnamon, brown sugar, fruit marmalade, cream cheese, and of course chocolate fillings. Right now in New Orleans, hoards of bakeries are churning out thousands of varieties of cakes in honor of the three kings and inserting plastic babies representing the Christ-child or their signature tokens.

The cakes are decorated in royal colors of purple for justice, green for faith, and gold for power. The colors chosen resemble a jeweled crown honoring the Wise Men who visited the Christ-child on Epiphany.

It's not too late to eat a Mardi Gras King Cake, in fact in New Orleans they are eaten until Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," the last day of the Carnival season and the day before Ash Wednesday and not again until the following year on January 6th.

Did you yell "I got the baby!?" if so, bake a Mardi Gras King Cake and pass on a great New Orleans tradition.